



# connections

*The newsletter of the Massachusetts  
Greenways and Trails Program*

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## **New England Greenways: A strategy in the struggle against a changing climate**

Climate change is upon us. In Massachusetts, winters are getting warmer, spring is coming earlier, precipitation patterns are shifting, and sea level is rising. These changes are happening now, and they will continue. The only question is how far and how fast.

The 2007 report from the Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment documents that since the 1970s average temperatures in the northeast have already risen 1.3 degrees leading to noticeable changes, and over the next few decades, temperature is estimated to rise 8 to 12 degrees more.

One of nature's most important response strategies to these inevitable and varied changes is and will be migration – the migration of seasons, plant species, wildlife, and yes, even the migration of humans and the activities we engage in.

The article “When Worlds Collide” in *Conservation Magazine* notes that already, “hundreds of species – from butterflies to birds, plants, bats, and rats – are moving poleward by up to 300 kilometers. These surprising numbers are but a prelude of things to come, triggered by a minuscule temperature rise of just 0.6 degrees Celsius over the last century.” The situation will only worsen in the next 100 years. “Some species will shift thousands of kilometers closer to the poles, ... and that kind of movement in today's fragmented habitats spells trouble.”

Given this impending situation, a part of our human response to climate change, in addition to reducing greenhouse gases, must be to provide nature with some un-fragmented space to migrate. And our most efficient and effective strategy for this will be to actively protect, promote and manage greenways – linear corridors of protected and / or undeveloped land.

### **Greenway Priorities?**

As a strategic approach to climate change, not all greenway priorities will be equal.

- **Regional Greenways:** Species will be migrating hundreds of miles. Greenways to facilitate this migration will need to be developed on multi-state and regional scales.
- **North – South Greenways:** Much of nature's migration in response to these environmental changes will naturally be northward. In New England, we are fortunate that our geology conforms to this orientation (partly as a result of the last bout of climate change). Our rivers and mountain ranges tend to run north – south, and thus, present

ideal natural corridors for protection that will also have benefits, like water quality improvements and ridgeline protection, that go beyond resiliency for climate change.

- **Valleys and Ridges:** In addition to northward, natural migration may also occur up and down slope as species seek new niches in response to local and micro-climate changes. Again, this will lead us to focus our greenway efforts on our rivers corridors and ridges.
- **Coastal Areas:** As one of the most dramatic impacts of climate change is likely to be sea level rise, greenways that protect a coastal buffer will be particularly important for protecting coastal species and ecosystems.
- **Existing Protected and Undeveloped Areas:** Finally, the most efficient and effective greenways protection strategies should start with the existing landscape, and build upon areas of currently protected and undeveloped open space.

### A Strong Starting Point

We are lucky in Massachusetts in that we can begin this strategy from a place of strength.

- We benefit from the north-south oriented geography of the region as already noted.
- We already have ***Commonwealth Connections; the greenway vision for Massachusetts***, a plan produced by the Department of Conservation and Recreation in 2001, which identifies many priority river, ridge, and coastal greenways.
- We already have a number of successful and high profile greenway initiatives underway that connect to our neighboring states including, but not limited to, efforts to protect the Appalachian Range, the Connecticut River, and the Quabbin to Cardigan Greenway.
- Finally, Massachusetts has a strong record of land and greenway protection involving a diversity of public, private, and local partners.

Massachusetts has an opportunity to strengthen its leadership in the struggle against climate change. As we – organizations, agencies and individuals – continue to develop and implement strategies and action plans to deal land protection, smart growth and climate change; greenways corridors should be a central part. None of the strategies needed to deal with climate change will be easy, but with leadership, commitment and partnership, we can help provide the necessary space for inevitable change.

## Tips and Tools

(Resources, links, and publications)

*When Worlds Collide* <http://www.conbio.org/CIP/article81whe.cfm>.

**Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment** [\*Confronting Climate Change in the U.S. Northeast: Science, Impacts, and Solutions\*](#), released July 11, 2007,  
[www.northeastclimateimpacts.org/#Papers](http://www.northeastclimateimpacts.org/#Papers)

***A Radical Step to Preserve a Species: Assisted Migration***

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CE0DB1F30F930A15752C0A9619C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>

**National Park Service (NPS) Rivers and Trails Program** is inviting applications for requests for assistance. Application deadline is August 1, 2008. This program provides 1-2 years NPS staff time related to river restoration, community trail networks, or urban parks. For more information contact Charles Tracy, [charles\\_tracy@nps.gov](mailto:charles_tracy@nps.gov) or 617-223-5210 or go to <http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtca/MA.pdf>. Application: [http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/contactus/cu\\_apply.html](http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/contactus/cu_apply.html).

## Blazing the Way

The **Friends of the Blue Hills** initiated a new Adopt-A-Trail program in 2008. Trail adopters are responsible for walking a particular section of the trail on a regular basis, and performing basic maintenance, as well as serving as an ambassador to the hiking public. ‘Section Leaders,’ who have significant trail work experience, provide constructive feedback and act as sounding boards for ideas Adopters may have. Adopters can do the work alone or bring additional volunteers with them. Volunteer training, both classroom and trail work based, is provided by the Friends of the Blue Hills trails program, which began in 2007 and also organizes supervised volunteer trail projects twice a month. Trail adopters visit the trail at least twice a year, in the spring to clear damage from the winter, and in the autumn after the leaves fall. After work days, the Adopters complete a report describing the work they completed and the work still left to do. Work focuses on four main areas:

- Clean drainage structures, such as waterbars, culverts and ditches
- Remove overhanging and downed branches and small trees
- Remove trash
- Report major problems on the trail, such as large tree blow-downs, for follow-up by a trail work crew or DCR.

The Friends of the Blue Hills’ newsletter from January to March 2008 contains an article on the new program, and contains contact information. The newsletter can be found at <http://www.friendsofthebluehills.org/PDFs/JanMar08.pdf>. Visit the Friends of the Blue Hills website at <http://www.friendsofthebluehills.org/>.

## On the Road Ahead

(Upcoming events and deadlines)

**Mahican-Mohawk Trail hikes**, June 15. There will be two hikes along parts of the Mahican – Mohawk Trail for Father Days.

- One hike suitable for families with small children will be about 2 1/2 miles long and includes lots of flowers to enjoy, Sluice Brook as it tumbles into the Deerfield River, Wilcox Hollow access to the River and the former forestry nursery with its many non-native plants. Bring water, a snack and bug repellent. Meet at the Route 2 Trail Head near the State Police Barracks at 9:30 AM. Hikers should pre-register with Polly Bartlett at 413-625-6628 since car spotting is necessary.

- The other hike will be in the Mohawk Trail State Park and will climb to the ridge above the camp ground to Todd Mountain and its view down the Deerfield River Valley. Although this hike is only about four miles long, it climbs 1,200 feet in a short distance and may not be suitable for young children. The hike will start at 9:00 AM from the Park Headquarters at the Mohawk State Park on Route 2 in Charlemont. Hikers should pre-register with Polly Bartlett at 413-625-6628.

The **Midstate Trail 95-mile End-to-End Day Hike Series for 2008** schedule is at <http://www.midstatetrail.org/hikes.htm>. This month, hikes are scheduled for June 1, 14, and 28.

**Cape Walk 2008**, daily May 31 to June 8, from Provincetown to Bourne. For more information and the schedule, go to <http://www.capecodcommission.org/pathways/home.htm#walk>.

**Blue Hills Mountain Bike Day**, June 15, Blue Hills Reservation in Milton. Sponsored by the Southeastern MA Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association. For more information, contact Ralph Gillis at [ralph.gillis@gmail.com](mailto:ralph.gillis@gmail.com).

**National Trails Symposium**, November 15-18, Little Rock Arkansas. With speakers and presentations from across the country, the symposium will discuss a nationwide vision for trails and greenways, and address motorized and non-motorized trail issues.

The first annual **National Get Outdoors Day**, June 14. Coordinated by the USDA Forest Service and the American Recreation Coalition. There are no predefined locations in Massachusetts, but more information about the event is at <http://www.getoutdoorsusa.org>.

**National Trails Day**, June 7. American Hiking Society's signature trail awareness program, National Trails Day, inspires the public and trail enthusiasts nationwide to seek out their favorite trails to discover, learn about, and celebrate trails while participating in educational exhibits, trail dedications, gear demonstrations, instructional workshops and trail work projects. Massachusetts has many National Trails Day events around the state, including the events below, which are listed on the National Trails Day website. For more information or to register an event, go to: <http://www.americanhiking.org/NTD.aspx>.

<b>Sponsoring Organization</b>	<b>Event Name</b>	<b>Community</b>
<u>Sudbury Valley Trustees</u>	Hike through the Crane Swamp Region	Westborough
<u>Sturbridge Trails Committee</u>	Trail Ribbon Cutting	Sturbridge
<u>U. S. Army Corps of Engineers</u>	Family Fun in Hiking	Southbridge
<u>U. S. Army Corps of Engineers</u>	Trail Opening Ceremony	Brimfield
<u>Cape Cod Pathways</u>	Cape Walk	Barnstable
<u>Westport River Watershed Alliance</u>	River Clean Up	Westport
<u>F.A.I.R &amp; City of Attleboro</u>	National Trails Day	Attleboro
<u>Bay State Trail Riders Association, Inc.</u>	Benefit Pleasure Ride	Oxford
<u>Wachusett Greenways</u>	Family Fun Day	West Boylston

<u>The Trustees of Reservations</u>	Weir River Farm Trail	Hingham
<u>Essex County Greenbelt</u>	Willowdale Meadow Loop Trail	Topsfield
<u>REI Hingham</u>	REI Hingham Presents National Trails Day - Wompatuck Trail Care Event	Hingham
<u>Friends of North Andover Trails</u>	Andover/North Andover Trails Day	Andover/North Andover
<u>People Making a Difference (PMD)</u>	Belle Isle Marsh	East Boston
<u>REI Boston</u>	REI Presents National Trails Day Service Project at Franklin Park	Boston

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**Please also forward this** to others who might be interested in Massachusetts Greenways and Trails.



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[www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/greenway/index.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/greenway/index.htm)

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